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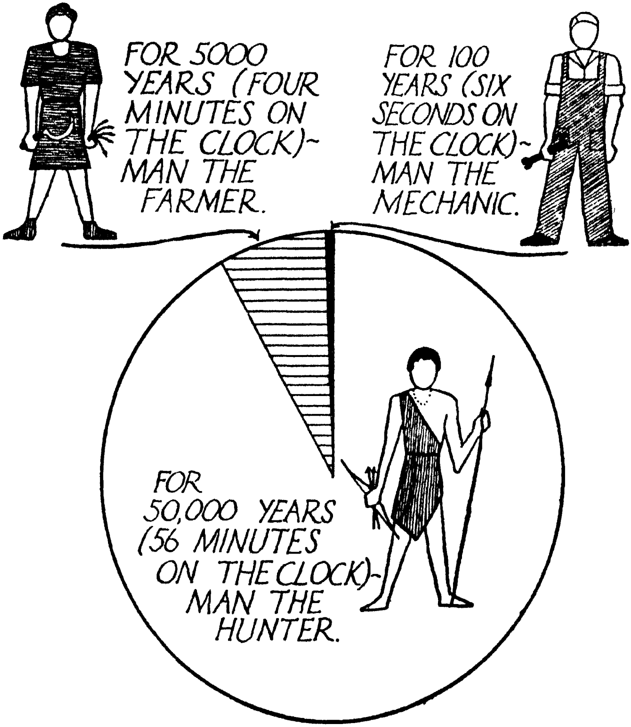
THE PROGRESS OF EARLY MAN



THE THREE GREAT STAGES OF HUMAN HISTORY

THE PROGRESS OF EARLY MAN

BY

STUART PIGGOTT

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR

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EDITED BY
GERALD BULLETT

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Nos. 6 *and* 7 *are from air photographs by Major W.* G. *Allen.*

THE PROGRESS OF EARLY MAN

CHAPTER I

METHOD AND AIMS

THE study of prehistoric man has grown in the last fifty years from the hobby of the eccentric to an elaborate science. In those years a really immense amount of information has been collected, and the process still goes on, so that eventually it should be possible to write a history of prehistory. This book tries to show, in the barest outlines, the story of early man as we interpret it at present. There are still many gaps to be filled; many uncertainties of detail that in a short account are not apparent, but the main pattern seems clear. The book is a summary of results, and the technical evidence on which statements are based would be meaningless to readers who were not archaeologists, and probably boring to those who were. But it is as well that the reader should have some idea of the methods employed to working out the story of man's remote past, for he may then be less distrustful of some statement or other which draws from him the immediate exclamation: 'But how on earth can you find *that* out?' Also he may dimly appreciate how museums can be quite exciting hunting-grounds to some people, and even have some understanding of the many and confusing activities of a modern excavation. We will confine ourselves to archaeology in Britain, as being more familiar and nearer home.

First, what is archaeology? It is a rather forbidding name for an important department of the study of mankind; a study which can be divided into three—the immensely long prehistoric past, for which no written account exists; the comparatively short historical period when the story is carried on by written records; and finally, the present. Archaeology is the study of man in the first of these periods—that before written history—and it is the study of man in the widest sense: his daily life, his religious customs, his arts and industries, his trading and colonizing, and his relation to his environment. The archaeologist's task is to reconstruct, from all available evidence, as complete a picture of the remote past as possible, and this he does in a way closely resembling that of the detective.

Archaeological method consists of accurately observing and recording facts, and making common-sense deductions from them. The facts (or clues) are the relics left behind by prehistoric man—the remains of the villages and towns he built and abandoned, the tools he lost or hid, the earthworks he made for defence or boundaries, the traces of the fields he tilled, his temples and his tombs. No longer the monopoly of cobwebbed antiquarians, archaeology has now come out into the open air with a vengeance. The final interpretations and deductions must necessarily be made by the student working in a library or museum, but the raw material from which he works has been collected by field-archaeologists discerning half-effaced earthworks from aeroplanes, tramping the moors and downs with notebook and camera, surveying with theodolite and level, or carrying out that most complex and delicate work—excavating.

An enormous amount of important archaeological work is done by field-observation alone, without any excavation, and the information obtained can usually best be recorded in the form of a map. Maps and archaeologists are inseparable, and in England we have the long standing association of the national map-makers, the Ordnance Survey, with archaeologists. Since its earliest days the Survey has carefully and accurately included archaeological information upon its maps—a procedure unknown in any other country—and finally developed its own brilliant archaeological department, which, with the co-operation of archaeologists all over Britain, produces maps showing the distribution of archaeological remains of various periods, and consequently the distribution of population in these times. Such recording work is among the most valuable features of modern archaeology. In these maps, too, we see the collaboration with other sciences that archaeology demands. Geologists and botanists together decide what type of soil would, in a natural state, support forest, shrub or grass-land; and when these areas are marked in by appropriate symbols we see at once how the distribution of the settlements of early man was dictated by the geography—he shunned the forests and concentrated on the high open lands. This is but one of the many fascinating points brought out by distribution maps.

Excavation is, of course, the most important method of acquiring archaeological knowledge and it is a complex and difficult task requiring expert knowledge and skill. In the past, the digging of, say, a barrow or prehistoric burial mound was as often as not regarded as a pleasant diversion whereby the local squire might entertain a party of guests after lunch on a day unpropitious for hunting, when, watching a sturdy labourer ferociously hacking his way into the mound, the gentlemen of the party might exchange appropriate classical quotations, and the ladies be pleasantly horrified at the sight of disinterred human bones. The loot from the digging—a 'rude urn of sun-baked clay' or a 'brazen spearhead'—would then be carried home to adorn the library mantelpiece until it was broken or lost, and one more barrow would have been irreparably destroyed from the view-point of scientific archaeology.

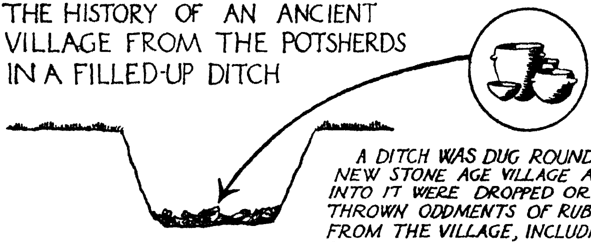
It is, however, almost entirely due to the superhuman genius of one barrow-digging squire that today such an excavation would take an expert archaeological staff and a band of trained workmen from six weeks to two months to complete, and that, at the end of that time, every possible relevant fact would have been observed and recorded. For the foundations of modern excavation technique in England were laid by General Pitt-Rivers in his work on his Dorset estates; and, indeed, so much was he ahead of his times that since his death in 1900, little improvement of his methods has been found possible.

It is neither possible nor desirable to describe here the complicated processes of excavation: they vary with the requirements of each separate site. But in order to give some idea of the general scheme we will take a New Stone Age village, of which a 'reconstructed' account is given in Chapter VI. On Windmill Hill, near Avebury in north Wiltshire, the remains of such a village have recently been excavated. When the work was begun in 1924, the period represented by the site was archaeologically practically unknown in Britain, and the excavator, Mr. Alexander Keiller, realized to the full that excavation must, in some ways, mean destruction—

the accumulated filling of ditches, the ashes of hearths, the jumble of potsherds and bones in a rubbish-heap, must all be disturbed and removed in order that the objects contained in them might be studied to the full. Consequently, every precaution was taken that nothing should be unrecorded, however unimportant it might seem at the time. Only by these means could one be sure of having extracted every scrap of information on the unexplored period which was being revealed.

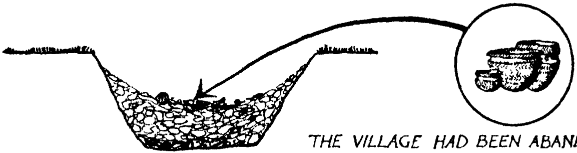
After an accurate survey of the faint traces of the site on the surface had been made, the excavation mainly consisted of removing the accumulated filling of earth and ancient debris that had filled up the ditches cut in the chalk surrounding the village. Things left about on the surface decay or are destroyed by weather, but in a ditch or other digging there is every chance of earth falling in and so preserving them, and, indeed, most of our information about prehistoric man in England comes from the rubbish that fell into, or was put into, the pits and ditches he dug. The soil was removed from the ditches at Windmill Hill in layers six inches deep at a time, and in digging a layer nothing was removed that could possibly be left unmoved in the position in which it was found until the entire layer was finished. The 'digging' was done by loosening the earth with small trowels or penknifes, and the loosened soil removed by

HOW THE EXCAVATOR RECOVERS THE HISTORY OF AN ANCIENT VILLAGE FROM THE POTSHERDS IN A FILLED-UP DITCH



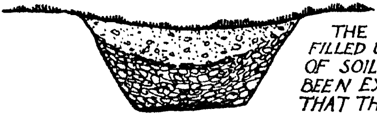
4000 YEARS AGO

A DITCH WAS DUG ROUND A NEW STONE AGE VILLAGE AND INTO IT WERE DROPPED OR THROWN ODDMENTS OF RUBBISH FROM THE VILLAGE, INCLUDING PIECES OF BROKEN POTS OF THE TYPES IN THE CIRCLE ABOVE.



PERHAPS 100 YEARS LATER

THE VILLAGE HAD BEEN ABANDONED BY ITS ORIGINAL INHABITANTS, AND SOIL HAD RAPIDLY FALLEN IN THE DITCH FROM THE SIDES. A TRIBE WITH A TYPE OF POT LIKE THOSE ABOVE CAME AND LEFT THEIR RUBBISH AND POTSHERDS AT A HIGHER LEVEL IN THE DITCH



TODAY

THE DITCH IS PRACTICALLY FILLED UP BY SLOW ACCUMULATION OF SOIL, AND THE FILLING HAS BEEN EXCAVATED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE ORIGINAL SEQUENCE OF OCCUPATION IS REVEALED.

soft brushes, or even blown off with bellows, so that nothing, however delicate, was damaged. Then one could see, within the white chalk edges of the ditch, the remains of hearths, with patches of charcoal surrounded by the bones of joints that had been cooked, the broken pottery, the flint and bone implements, all in the exact positions in which they had been lost or abandoned four thousand years ago. Photographs and plans were then made, the objects removed and placed in trays for washing and cataloguing, and another layer was dug. In this way the fullest record was kept of the filling of the ditches (which were, in places, as much as nine feet deep) from top to bottom, and the depth of every object was known. This is most important, for nine-foot ditches do not fill up naturally in a day, and things found at the bottom are obviously older than those found just under the turf. So in the Outer Ditch of Windmill Hill could be traced the whole history of the site. In the lowest levels were fragments of bowls of plain, dark, well-made pottery, with practically no ornament, which had been used by the original inhabitants, and then, quite suddenly, there turned up, near the top, fragments of quite a different kind—coarse and thick, covered with elaborate patterns made with string or finger-nails pressed into the damp clay. With both the plain pottery from low in the ditch, and the ornamented pieces from near the top, were found many stone implements but no metal; they were both New Stone Age, but we now know that in this part of Wiltshire the ornamented-pottery people were later than the makers of the plain pots. A new chapter had been added to prehistory.

Nor did the excavators' work stop here. The fragments of pottery, the implements of flint or other stones, the animal bones and the tools made from them, had to be carefully washed (and if necessary treated with preservative) and then numbered and catalogued before being transferred to the museum. Then came the laborious task of joining up broken potsherds until the original shape and proportions of the pot were once again visible, or building up a shattered skull from a hundred fragile scraps. Experts were then called in to determine the breeds of animals from the bones, to identify the stones from which implements had been made, to examine the charcoal fragments to determine the type of wood that had been burnt, and to classify the microscopic snail-shells from samples of soil, which, by their having belonged to snails which only live in moist situations (and today are never found on the open downs) showed the climate to have been wetter than it is at present.

From such detailed observations as these it is being increasingly possible to form a more or less complete idea of life in the various phases of ancient times. Students working on the raw material provided by the excavators and field-workers worry out the sequences of type—how fashions in pot-making changed from century to century, or how improvements were introduced in bronze axeheads. One of the greatest archaeological achievements of recent years has been the completion of a catalogue—a card index—of every tool or weapon of the Bronze Age that has been found in England and Wales—perhaps some 20,000 in all. It sounds very dull and rather useless, but there can be a real excitement in using it. Suppose we want to know about a certain kind of bronze knife, which has frequently been found with a type of pot called a beaker which we know to belong to the earliest age of metal—about 1800 B.C. The folk who made beakers came mainly from Holland—did they bring the knives with them? We have in front of us a map of England with a thick crop of black dots on it, each dot representing where a beaker has been found, and we see how they cluster along the east coast, showing that their makers must have first landed and settled there, spreading inland later. Now for the knives. One by one the cards recording the type of knife we want are taken from the catalogue, the place where it was found looked up in a gazetteer and a dot placed on a blank map, so that eventually we, too, have a distribution map, this time of bronze knives. Now we can look for concentrations of spots, and compare with the beakers. Do they agree? They do not. The knives have not been found in any number in eastern England, but mainly in Dorset and Wiltshire, with a suspicious cluster about Weymouth. Obviously the makers of beakers did not arrive complete with bronze knives, but probably, when they had established themselves in Wessex, began importing them from the Continent (where similar types are found) into some south coast port, probably in the Weymouth region. This is the sort of archaeological reconstruction that can be made with catalogues and maps based on them.

Such are a few of the methods by which archaeologists piece together the story of man's remote past. It is a jig-saw puzzle from which many pieces are missing, although more and more are being recovered every year, and at its best it gives an incomplete view.

We have to reconstruct man from his works, and the oddments he has left behind for us to study. The essential humanity has gone; in reconstructing the life of a remote period we are sometimes despondent, as who might look at an abandoned dinner-table and attempt to visualize, from the vacant chairs, the empty coffee-cups, the cigarette-ash, and the blandly uncommunicative table, something of the personalities of the diners, their conversation, their appearance. It is, after all, the people themselves who mattered, and tools or tombs are the means by which we try, however imperfectly, to recapture the lives of our most remote ancestors.

CHAPTER II

THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE

BEFORE we can start to consider in any detail the story of early man, we must first of all get the right view-point, and, standing well back, consider history from the time of the first true men to the present day. Reading one chapter only of a book is bound to give a false impression, and the prehistory of man is only one chapter in the book of man's progress, later chapters of which we are ourselves making today.

First, we must sort out our ideas about progress. When in the middle of the last century men first began to accept the principle of evolution, it was thought that, apart from occasional regrettable lapses, human progress was a continuous inevitable movement that has steadily gone on everywhere from the earliest times. It was a very nice and very moral idea, and was eagerly taken hold of because it flattered the people who believed in it. They were rather more confident about things than we are today, and quite seriously believed that they had reached a stage of civilization which was in every way superior to all that had gone before. This being so, it was pleasant to consider human history (and what little was beginning to be found out about prehistory) as a solemn and stately procession leading up to the glorious culmination of their own time. The Primeval Savage chips out a rough flint implement; then, not so savage, he fashions a better one, and so on, until Man, ever moving towards the angels, reaches a momentous stage of his journey, brandishing the polished axe of the New Stone Age. Of course Bronze Age man was 'better' than Stone Age man—and so on, getting indeed better and better until the Great Exhibition, when man seemed to be at all events within hailing distance of the outposts of the Heavenly Kingdom.

But when archaeologists began to find out more about the early civilizations, and historians to take a broader outlook on their own subject, it was realized that while, at all events in material achievements, there had been progress from the earliest times, it was no orderly or continuous process. Rather did it take the form of a series of irregular jumps or rushes forward; quite suddenly there would come in the history of a people, for one reason or another, a short and brilliant flare-up of intense activity which would, before long, flicker and perhaps nearly die away, until, perhaps, fanned into flame once more when the next 'vortex period' came about. Civilization after civilization rose to a maximum and then died out, but yet each had contributed to the sum of human progress. The motion of history is really a great spiral; the sequence of events repeats itself, as one might have points one above another on a spiral, but as in the spiral, they *are* one above another. Human progress is based on the pooling, so to speak, of ideas and experience, and the common stock becomes constantly greater, enriched by each successive culture.

When we look at the whole course of human history, we see that it can be split up into three great divisions. There have been two occasions when the whole pattern of man's life has been absolutely and radically altered from what it had previously been—there are other important milestones on the journey, but these are the posting-houses where the horses were changed. The three great phases of humanity are these—Man the Hunter, Man the Farmer, and Man the Mechanic.

The animals are hunters. The lambs bleating for fresh pasture no less than the lions roaring after their prey are seeking food and eating it where they may, while the proverbial sluggard-shaming ant has but few compeers in the matter of stocking a winter store-cupboard. And when our remotest ancestors, not wholly ape, not wholly man, are first seen (although darkly) in the archaeologist's glass, they too are hunters. We shall deal with the lives of hunters more fully in Chapter III—for the present it is enough to emphasize the insecurity of their existence, their isolation into small tribal groups, making almost impossible that pooling of common knowledge and experience which is the basis of civilization; that impermanence of the small unit-family which makes continuity of culture hazardous, and the constant battle against nature—the great beasts and the climate. In such a state of existence the development of man's brain was necessarily extremely slow, and the duration of the hunting stage of humanity—the so-called Old Stone Age—was immense, possibly 100,000 years, and at the very least 50,000. Such a vast interval of time is almost impossible to imagine; in Northern Europe it lasted, at its lowest estimate, ten times as long as the Farmer Stage (beginning somewhere about 2000 B.C.) and five hundred times as long as the present length of the Age of Machinery, which began about 1800 A.D. If we imagine the total length of man's prehistory and history as represented by an hour on a clock face, with today at 12 o'clock, the beginning of the agricultural stage would be at about four minutes to twelve, and the beginning of the mechanical stage only six seconds before the hour.

Before we go on to consider the second and third great divisions of history, it is very important to realize that changes of culture do not take place suddenly or simultaneously all over the world. An idea, or group of ideas, is produced in the mind of an individual or a group (such as the idea of growing grain or of making a steam-engine), and this idea, when put into practice, slowly spreads. Such an idea as that of agriculture may spread because the neighbours of the tribe who started the practice see the advantages to be gained and so copy their more go-ahead fellows, or it may be imposed on people by conquest. Other ideas (such as new religions) may be deliberately spread by missionaries who think that they alone know the truth, and are anxious to make others take the same viewpoint for their own good. Throughout man's existence, ideas have thus originated and spread out, like ripples round a stone thrown into a pond. Some have had little influence outside a limited area; others (the agricultural idea for instance) have profoundly altered the whole course of human development, and, in the realm of abstract ideas, such deliberate reshapings of the pattern of life as Buddhism or Christianity or Communism have altered the lives of the people in a way that will be perceptible in the future, not only to the historian who studies the thoughts of past men, but to the archaeologist who depends for his information on their material achievements.

But the most far-reaching changes do not take place everywhere at the same time. There are today people who are still in the Hunting Stage; while nearer home, on the island of St. Kilda, there were, until very recently, agriculturalists as untouched by mechanical development as the farmers of pre-Roman England. And there is always a long overlap between one culture and another—just as today in a country village the cottages might be lit with lamps and candles, while the Rectory and the Manor shone bright with electric light from their own installations. This may all seem rather obvious, but it is surprising how easily it is forgotten, and people who clamour for precise dates from archaeologists ('When did the Bronze Age begin and when did it end?' and so forth) forget that first of all there are a great many Bronze Ages—one for each region in fact—and the beginnings and ends of them are obviously rather vague and not necessarily the same in any two regions.

In Chapter V we shall see how Man became a farmer, and how important was this change from the uneasy, uncertain life of the hunter to the settled existence of the agriculturalist. Village and town life, with the country as the essential background and backbone of the whole community, is the basis of all that we today treasure as Western European civilization, and once the rudiments of this way of life were established and absorbed by the majority of the peoples of Europe it continued, singularly unchanged, for some four thousand years.

It is perhaps difficult to realize at first the essential unity of this phase in Europe, lasting as it did from the New Stone Age to the end of the eighteenth century A.D., because half-way through it becomes History. There is a regrettable tendency to make a hard and fast line between Prehistory and History, which blinds people to this real continuity of culture. This blindness is largely the work of those historians who are mainly concerned with individuals and personalities; the trivialities of the intertribal battles of Mediaeval Europe; the wearisome dynastic intrigues which had not the slightest effect on contemporary culture. As Mr. H. G. Wells has recently said: 'The total influence of the old warfare upon human destiny was enormously exaggerated by the nationalist historians. . . . It was of infinitely less importance than migration. The peasant life went on unchangingly, squalid and laborious, as it had been going on for the majority of human beings since agriculture began.'[1] This is the outlook of the archaeologist, and admirably emphasizes the importance of the agricultural background—through the classical ages of Greece and Rome, through Mediaeval Europe and the Renaissance, up to the discovery and adoption of mechanical power and all that it implies at the beginning of the nineteenth century A.D.—the so-called Industrial Revolution.

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[1] H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come.*

At first sight it may appear difficult to find similarities between life in an Early Iron Age village about 200 B.C. and in an English mediaeval village in the fourteenth century A.D., or between the Romano-British town of Calleva Atrebatum and the Stratford of Shakespeare's day, but in point of fact it would be a much harder task to find essential differences. The villages, with their population mainly of farmers and farm-labourers, and in addition the all-important smith and carpenter; their only link with the outer world the visits of itinerant merchants and pedlars; life usually peaceful, unless disturbed by brawling and skirmishing between rival members of the small 'heroic' aristocracy which they indirectly supported—250 B.C. or A.D. 1350 were nearly indistinguishable. Nor in the more abstract matter of religion had there been any real change for centuries—the farmer who took milk and grain to the temple of the Moon Goddess at Ur in 2000 B.C. was not so very different in his outlook from the mediaeval yeoman bringing an offering to his church on the feast-day of its patron saint.

So with the towns. The market with its booths selling cloth or trinkets, foodstuffs or farm tools; the farmers standing in groups at the streetcorners; the plump merchants with pleased faces and heavy purses; the types are the same, and the economic conditions producing them the same, whether in Elizabethan England or the remote northern province under the Pax Romana. Agriculture was the basis of society for four thousand years. 'Nothing', said Cicero, 'is more excellent than agriculture, nothing more productive, nothing more pleasant, nothing more worthy of free men.' Cobbett, watching the approach of a new era at the beginning of the nineteenth century, would have been the first to echo and applaud the sentiment.

CHAPTER III

FIRST MEN

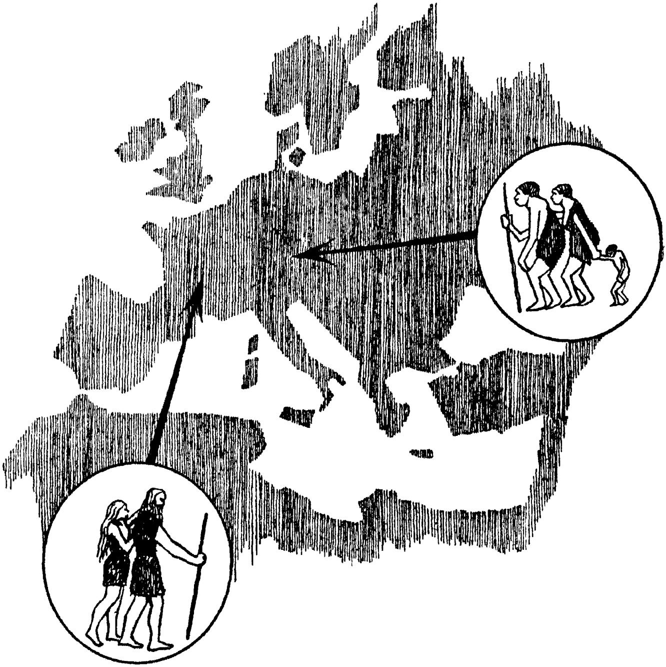
BEGINNINGS of things are always very vague and elusive and difficult to pin down, and the beginning of Man is a problem that has perplexed philosophers and scientists from the times when men first began to think about themselves and their environment. The earliest theories were made to fit into the religious systems current at the time; and, as certain religious systems have had a very long life, the ideas put forward by priests in Mesopotamia in the third millennium B.C. survived in Western Europe for four thousand years. In the middle of the last century, however, biological science fought and finally won the battle against the orthodox religious view that Man was a phenomenon unique among living creatures, and the result of a special creation—in short, that there had always been men and animals, the one made by God in His image, the other provided by God for man's use. The biologists showed conclusively that Man was himself merely a very specialized form of animal and that his nearest living relations (although very distant cousins) were certain of the higher apes. This view no thinking person now denies, but the problem is by no means simple. Assuming, first of all, that Man and the apes are the two branches of a capital Y, with a common ancestral stock as the upright of the letter, we still have to decide when, in geological or prehistoric time, apes and men first became recognizably distinct, and, what is really more important, how to distinguish between them in these early stages. What in fact distinguishes a very primitive man from a very advanced ape?

The question can be and has been answered more or less successfully in a great many different ways. The power of speech, the capacity for reasoning, the use of fire, all these have been suggested as infallible signs by which man may be distinguished from the beasts. But perhaps the most satisfactory criterion is that of the use of tools. Now the 'use of tools' should not be taken to mean merely such things as knives or spades or axes. You use a tool when you do anything by means of something that is not a part of your body: that is, by something artificial. A mole digs the ground with very capable fore-feet that are specially adapted for digging—a man digs with a spade which is again specially adapted for digging, but separate from him, a tool in fact. Just as the spade is a tool for digging, clothes are tools for keeping you warm, aeroplanes are tools for flying, fire a tool of infinite possibilities, and, to return to the difference between the mole's digging and the man's, there is this very important point that, when the man has finished digging and wants to cut down a tree, he can lay aside his spade and take up an axe. The mole can dig (and dig exceedingly well), but cannot adapt himself to do anything else. By using tools, man becomes infinitely adaptable. This means that he is not completely at the mercy of natural forces. If a great climatic change comes about from warm conditions to cold, warmth-loving animals must either migrate or die out; man, on the other hand, can make garments to clothe himself, shelters to shield himself from the weather, fires to warm himself by. So he persists by means of adapting himself, when the animals give way. The story of man's progress is the story of his slowly-growing mastery over Nature, his becoming more and more independent, more and more self-sufficing.

Our knowledge of the very earliest men—men little more than tool-using apes—is very slight and very confused. Fragments of skulls from a cave in China or from a gravel-pit in Sussex; a brain-pan from Java or a piece of lower jaw from Kenya—these are the tiny clues from which we try to reconstruct the beginnings of Man. Their age is so enormous that it is guesswork to put it into years —half a million or a million years ago mean really nothing to us, the amount is so inconceivably vast and outside our comprehension. But already, in this immeasurably remote past, we seem to see at least two great divisions of what was to be the human race; a difference not only in their actual physical type, but, much more extraordinary, in the way they made their stone tools. This is very important to archaeologists, because the tools of ancient Man are found much more often than actual remains of Man himself, and if one recognizes the two different ways of tool-making one can get some idea, from the finding of tools of one type or another, where the different races of men lived.

The two divisions of most primitive Man are roughly these. First there is the group of what we can almost call 'transitions' from apes to men. That is to say, they are not highly evolved apes nor unevolved men, but somewhere between the two, with probably more Man than ape in them. Low brows, heavy eyebrow-ridges, flat noses, projecting heavy jaws, a stooping shambling walk—such seem to have been the characteristics of the sub-men who, it seems, were particularly Asiatic in their distribution (the skulls found recently near Pekin are of this type). Such sub-men, forming a link between Man and the apes, are obviously to be expected, and it is all the more surprising that the other race of primitive men, who would seem to be contemporary with the sub-men, are, so far back as we can at present go, modern in type. They too must have had remote ancestors of more ape-like appearance, but, at the earliest point at which we can pick up the thread of the story of human evolution, we find in East Africa a type of man incredibly ancient but completely modern in physical type.

Both these races of men were, of course, tool-users, chipping out implements from stones or cutting bones into shape; but, for reasons unknown to us at present, they set about their stone chipping or flaking in an entirely different way. A man of the 'modern' type, wanting to make a chopper with which to cut up the flesh of the animal he had killed, would take a block of flint or other suitable stone and strike pieces off it, with another stone as a hammer, until the original piece was the desired chopper-shape. This is called 'core technique' because the 'core' of the original block is utilized. Not so with the sub-men. They regarded the original block only as a means to an end—as something from which they could strike off large flakes of material to make into tools—a 'flake technique'. These distinctions may sound rather trifling and unimportant, but it is only by such means as these that anything at all can be worried out from the obscure tangle of human origins, for the core-cultures and flake-cultures converged on Europe—the core-cultures from Africa and the



TRUE MEN AND SUB-MEN COME TO EUROPE

(N.B. The modern, not the ancient coast-lines are shown).

flake-cultures from Asia. It must be remembered that at this early time not only was geography very different from today (for instance England was joined to the main land mass of Europe), but climatic conditions were such that the now tropical areas of Africa and Asia were very suitable for human occupation.

This was the state of affairs, so far as we can piece together such scattered fragments as remain of the puzzle, that existed in Europe at the beginning of what is usually called the Old Stone Age —the Age of the Hunters—perhaps 100,000 years ago. As we saw in Chapter II, this Hunting Age lasted for such an immense time that it is almost impossible to grasp its length, and during this time the climate and the shapes of the continents themselves changed—

Men were on earth, while climates slowly swung
Fanning wide zones to heat and cold, and long
Subsidence turned great continents to sea,
And seas dried up, dried up interminably
Age after age.

The climatic changes, usually known as the Ice Ages, were so gradual that a period of five hundred years would have seen practically no change from warm semi-tropical conditions to a climate as cold as that of Lapland today. It should be remembered that all these early prehistoric ages are still very much under discussion, and archaeologists and geologists disagree (often very violently) over the relation between the successive Ice Ages and the various core- and flake-cultures that are distinguished in bewildering profusion. For our purposes we do not (luckily) have to enter into these sub-divisions, for throughout, so far as can be seen, the basic pattern of life remained unchanged. But the important distinction of two races—sub-men and true men, flake-cultures and core-cultures—should be remembered. Both existed side by side, and although many anthropologists think that the races were so distinct that there could be no question of interbreeding, the pattern of life seems to have been much the same in both.

When people are living in a high state of civilization, every now and again someone or other starts talking about the Simple Life or the Noble Savage, and insists that if people were to give up all the material advantages of civilization and return to a condition of Stone Age savagery, they would not only be immune from all the ills that flesh is heir to, but would automatically become a race of enlightened philosophers. To such as these the life of the primitive savage is the ideal natural existence, a life free from the responsibilities and worries of civilization, producing superb physique and a mind untrammelled by convention and radiant with beautiful thoughts. It is unlikely, however, that such a doctrine would number any anthropologists among its adherents, for if we look at the facts we are bound to conclude that the life of the most primitive men was, in Hobbes's classic phrase, 'nasty, brutish and shorte'.

The life was that of a small unit of people—a family or small tribe of inter-related families subsisting as best they might in the face of every adverse condition of climate and environment. Existence itself depended on such food as could be obtained by trapping or slaying the great beasts—elephants or rhinoceroses—or more often perhaps by scavenging in the wake of the carnivorous animals, creeping up jackal-like after a cave-lion had eaten his fill, in the hope that some shreds of flesh and skin might remain to appease the cravings of their half-starved bodies, or, still more fortunate, coming upon a dead animal that had been entrapped in some swamp. We may picture the scene. The corpse of one of the great elephants of the warm phases has been sighted half-embedded in a patch of marshy ground into which it has unwarily trod. Through the reeds come the men of the tribe—gaunt, skin-clad, with tangled dirt-matted hair. Lighter than the elephant, they can cross the boggy ground in safety, making eagerly for the corpse which means, for them and their families, the food they so sorely need. It is already considerably decayed and swarms of flies rise from the feast as the men throw themselves on it, hack at it with their flint choppers, tear off pieces of rank flesh, and cram it into their mouths. At last, besmeared with blood, they return to where the remnant of their tribe—the women and children—squat watching for their return. Then the meat is shared—some devoured raw, some half-roasted, half-burnt in a hastily-lit fire—every one gorging until, in a state of sickened repletion, they one by one fall into uneasy dyspeptic slumber. The Simple Life is not so beautiful in fact as in theory.

CHAPTER IV

SAVAGES AND ARTISTS

THE primitive stage of life described in the last chapter lasted for a length of time which it is impossible to state in years, although, at a guess, we may say it was probably for at least 30,000 years that Man continued in a semi-animal barbarism and made no real advance towards a higher state of civilization. The very mode of life was itself an almost insuperable barrier to progress. Life was insecure—a constant battle for the essentials of food, shelter, warmth, existence itself. Man had practically no control over Nature, and consequently no settled secure existence was possible. The hunter must follow the herds that are his sole food supply, and cannot settle in a permanent home: nor can he be assured of his food in advance. In such an animal state, mental development is almost impossible. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter II, the basis of civilization is the interchange of ideas, and in a society consisting of many separate wandering tribes such interchange cannot take place. A genius may arise in the tribe and produce some such revolutionary invention as the first bow-and-arrow, which may be adopted by that particular family; but, owing partly to the isolation of the unit, and to the fact that its few members might all be killed or die off within a comparatively short time, the invention would die with the tribe and never become diffused as part of that heritage of culture upon which a more civilized organization draws.

When we turn from the material culture of the first Stone Age men to their ideas and beliefs (so far as we can deduce them either from remains found or by comparison with peoples of similarly low culture who have survived to the present day—the Australian aborigines for instance), one important fact stands out at a remarkably early stage, and that is the belief in a future life, a belief to which the careful and deliberate burials bear witness. In the last chapter we described how the true men and sub-men converged upon Europe. As a result of this convergence, the true men, physically of modern type, appear to have adopted in some measure certain tricks of tool-making technique from the sub-men, whose race finally died out about this time, when there is a changing point in the Old Stone Age, as the great Hunting Stage is usually called. But before their final disappearance the sub-men of the type called Neanderthal Men (from a skull found at Neanderthal in

Germany) left us valuable witness of their beliefs in the form of a deliberate burial—a body buried with flint tools and a joint of meat for use in the other world. Similar burials of the true men are also known from about this time, and constantly later, but the burial described is exceedingly important as showing that even the lower form of Old Stone Age man was capable of thought about problems outside the more mundane affairs of daily life.

Anthropologists such as Sir James Frazer and others have shown that a belief in immortality, and the worship of the dead which goes with it, are found among the most savage peoples, and it seems that such a belief is largely due to the primitive misinterpretation of dreams. Tired with a long day's hunting, our Stone Age man curls up by a convenient sheltering rock and, falling asleep, dreams that he is again hunting with renewed vigour and miraculous success, and that with him are not only his fellow-hunters in the tribe, but his brother who was killed a year ago. What more natural than that, waking, he should imagine that he has in sleep passed into another world peopled not only by the spirits of those living, temporarily released in sleep, but those of the dead, permanently domiciled in this shadowy kingdom? Or, after weeks of semi-starvation, he gluts himself on a lucky kill, and then falls asleep, to be racked by the nightmares produced by an overladen stomach—sure evidence, to a man waking with an uneasy shudder in the chill dawn, that he has been beset by malevolent demons and grim unknown powers.

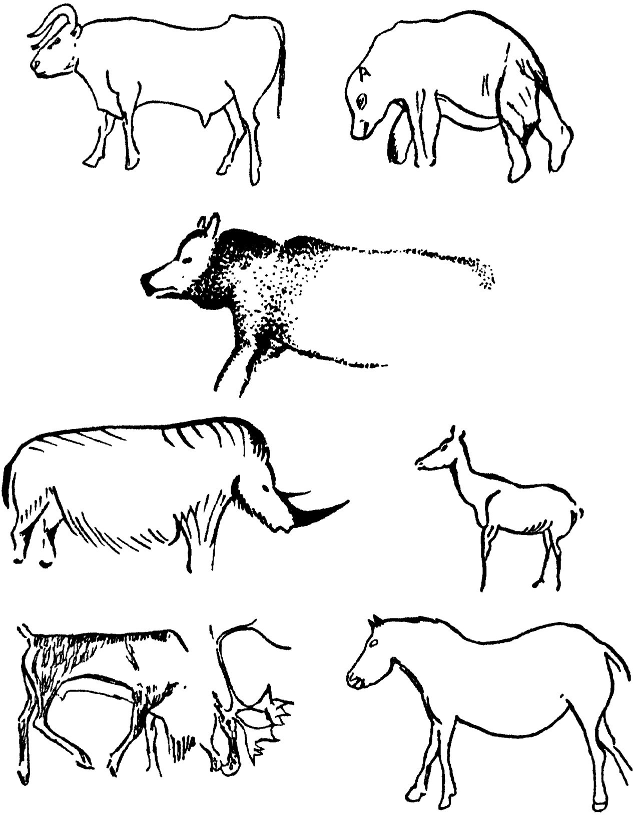
In some such manner begins religion and magic. As magic seems to have played an important part in the lives of the later Old Stone Age men, and to have been responsible for their very remarkable artistic outburst which we are later going to consider, it is important to realize the distinction between magic and religion. The two go hand in hand, and are often inextricably mixed, but there are essential differences. Religion has for its basis faith in a being or beings who control the workings of the universe and who may be adored, implored, and to some extent propitiated, by sacrifices or other means. Magic on the other hand is based on a misunderstanding of natural forces, and is an attempt to control these forces for the good of oneself and one's friends, or to the detriment of one's enemies, without the intervention of any supreme being. Magic is in fact the ancestor of science. The scientist, knowing from the laws of chemistry or physics that a given result should theoretically be obtained by a certain process, proceeds and obtains his result. The magician, believing himself to know the laws of nature, acts according to his belief, but, unlike the scientist, without result, since while both act sincerely, one acts on an erroneous belief, the other on an ascertained fact. This is the difference between magic and science; for a concrete instance of the distinction between religion and magic one may take the attempts to procure rain during a drought. The priest of a religion will offer prayers to the deity begging that he may so influence the natural forces (which are ultimately in his power) that rain may fall; the magician, working on the basic magic principle that like produces like, will sprinkle water on the parched ground to encourage the actual rain to a like performance.

We do not know whether religion, in the sense of a belief in a supreme being (a glorified 'Old Man' of the tribe) or in personified natural forces (gods of the tempest, of the earth, and of the waters), existed in the minds of Old Stone Age man, but, as we shall see, there is much evidence of the practice of elaborate magic.

At a period which we may perhaps roughly estimate as 20,000 years ago, there seems to have been a general movement of peoples, possibly owing to changing climatic conditions. The second cold period (or Ice Age) was giving way to warmer conditions in Europe, and as a result of this it is possible that such areas as those that are now the Gobi and Sahara Deserts (which would have been fertile and pleasant during Arctic conditions in Europe) became less habitable, and that people consequently migrated to more favoured areas. At all events, the first of the series of hunting cultures that make up the second half of the Old Stone Age begins to appear in Europe at this time, apparently coming in two streams, one from Africa and one from Asia through Russia. The culture that resulted from the mingling of these two strains was in its essentials the primitive hunting-life that had been going on for many thousands of years, but it does show certain advances; a more settled existence seems to have been led, and, in France particularly, caves and rock-shelters were lived in. But still we find none of the basic factors of true civilization: no communal life of village or town, no provision for food except by hunting, no domestication of animals. The new arrivals in Europe were still barbarous savages, but, by perhaps the most extraordinary and unexpected flash of human brilliance in the whole history of mankind, they were magnificent pictorial artists, producing on their cave-walls some of the finest drawings of animals that have ever been produced by any people at any period, and at least one masterpiece of sculpture in the round.

The basis of most, if not all of this art seems to have been magic. To the primitive mind there is something very uncanny about a portrait of a living person or animal—it is part of the object represented; something of its spirit seized by the artist and fixed in the carved or drawn representation. Once you have captured part of your animal's spirit by drawing it on the wall of a cave, it will be all the easier actually to capture the beast bodily; and to make matters all the more certain you can draw in spears pointing to his heart, or even, as the hunters did in one cave in the Pyrenees, make a life-size clay model (in this case a cave-bear) clothed with a real skin, and stick real spears into it. Then success in the hunt would be assured.

Not only can you help to destroy the animals of the hunt by magic, but if the herds are diminishing you can make them increase in the same way. You can draw the animals on a cave-wall, or make clay models of a bull and cow bison, such as were found in another Pyrenean cave. The tribes of North-West Australia hold the same belief—'that wherever the picture of an object of food is preserved in a picture cave, there that object will continue to flourish and increase'. The miracle of the Old Stone Age art is not that it existed as a magic ritual—as such it is common to many savage races—but that it should have reached such an astonishingly high standard of artistic excellence. It exists as engravings on bone; as drawings in charcoal or coloured earths on the walls of caves; in modelling in clay, in carving in relief and in the round. With the exception of certain sculptures it is truly primitive,



DRAWINGS OF ANIMALS BY THE STONE AGE MEN art, for it is entirely naturalistic and faithfully represents the original subject. This is typical of the early stages of artistic development, which begins by being true-to-nature and slowly becomes more and more conventionalized, with the natural shapes adjusted and arranged by the artist to an underlying pattern in his mind.

These Old Stone Age drawings of animals—bison, reindeer, mammoths, wild horses—have a vigour of line and a brilliance of technique that are altogether astounding. It cannot be described: it can only be appreciated by studying reproductions, or better still, the actual paintings still to be seen, after perhaps 15,000 years, on the walls of the caves in the Dordogne and the Pyrenees, which were inhabited by the people of the second part of the Old Stone Age. There in the cave mouth has been found the accumulated rubbish of generations—the remains of hearths, broken animal-bones, and implements of flint that show considerable advance on the large heavy choppers of the earlier men. Particularly, the ancestor of all present-day knives makes its appearance—a flint-blade with one sharp cutting-edge and the other blunted by fine chipping. With such a knife a modern anthropologist found that he could skin and cut up a small deer in twenty minutes, and in experienced hands such blades must have been put to a multitude of uses. Bone needles show that stitching with leather thongs was carried on, but the use of woven cloth had yet to be discovered, and apparently pottery was still unknown, although this point is at the moment under discussion among archaeologists.

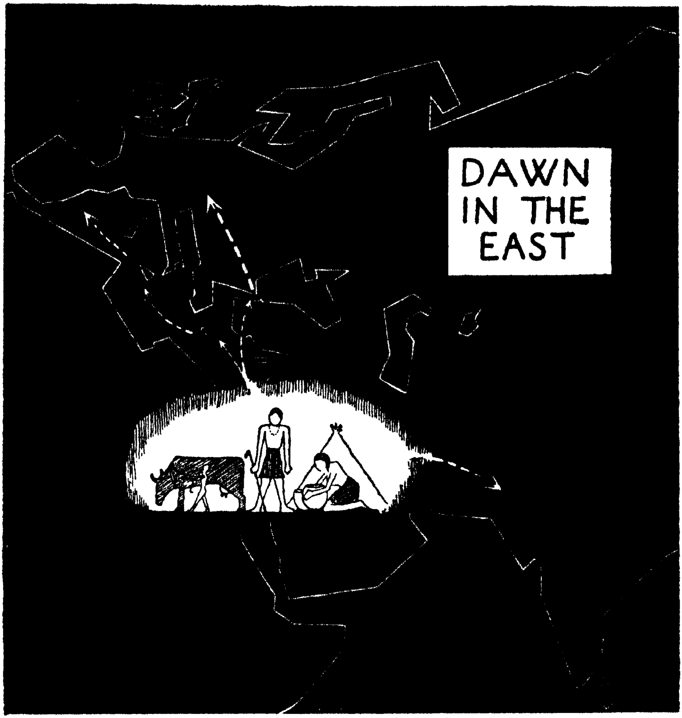
In addition to the drawings on the cave-walls and engravings on pieces of bone, or flat stones, some very interesting carvings in the round are known. Some of these are naturalistic representations of animals, but a special group consists of representations of human beings. As a general rule the human form is practically unknown in Old Stone Age art; and these statuettes of corpulent females, obviously typifying abundance and fertility, stand apart from the other artistic productions in that they are not really naturalistic, but conventionalized. They are something more than a representation; they express an abstract idea in the artist's mind, and to gain this effect the natural shapes are exaggerated or reduced to make a formal pattern. The finest of these statuettes, found at Lespugue, is a rhythmic arrangement of curves and masses answering completely in feeling to much sculpture of the present day, and the existence of such a high degree of artistic sophistication among such primitive folk as the Stone Age hunters makes the phenomenon of their art all the more amazing. But this outburst of art, and the barbarian culture which produced it, were doomed to extinction; for, as we shall see in the next chapter, the changing climate was once more to influence profoundly the conditions of life in the Old World, and to herald the dawn of a new order of things, when Man should make his first great advance and change from the Hunter to the Farmer.

CHAPTER V

DAWN IN THE EAST

ROUND about 6000 B.C. came the end of the Ice Ages. The limit of the icefields retreated further and further northwards until it reached its present position—the Arctic Circle. The slight rise in the average temperature of Europe which brought this about naturally resulted in the ice's melting, and this meant that the climate changed from dry cold conditions, which favoured open grasslands or steppes, to warmer and moister weather, which encouraged the growth of trees: hitherto, trees had grown only in sheltered localities and had been stunted and dwarfed at that. So the forest spread slowly, encroaching on, and overwhelming, the open steppes; and before the advancing forests went the reindeer and bison and wild horse, moving northward, where open country still existed. The Ancient Hunters had nothing to hunt and nowhere to hunt it. Many beasts, their main sources of food and clothing, either moved away from the woods, instinctively pressing northward, or, worsted in the battle with the changing climate, died out. Man, no longer guided solely by blind instinct, but beginning to gain some control over Nature, adapted himself to his changed surroundings as best he might. Unable to penetrate the tangled undergrowth of the great gloomy forests, which were frequented no less by tangible wild beasts than by the nameless horrors and bogies of a primitive imagination, the wretched remnants of the Old Stone Age folk eked out a precarious existence on the forest fringe—hunting a little where poor soil would support only a scanty scrub growth, or living on the edge of the marshes or the seashore on a diet almost exclusively of shellfish. Things were at a very low ebb in North-West Europe, and had man had to fight his way towards civilization here alone, we might not today have reached a higher stage than that of the First Artists. But other parts of the Old World were in a more fortunate state than the remote North-West.

Those same climatic changes that brought to a close the brilliant barbaric episode of the First Artists of Europe, gave an opportunity for the foundation of true civilization elsewhere. Owing to the increased dampness that followed the melting of the ice-sheet, the lands that are now the arid deserts of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and Western India, were at this time (about 7000–6000 B.C.) in a better state for primitive occupation,


DAWN IN THE EAST

while in Egypt the annual flooding of the Nile valley gave every encouragement for primitive agriculture. And so, somewhere and somehow, there sprang into being a group of ideas that were destined to alter the entire pattern of man's life and to inaugurate a new era—a change as radical and far-reaching as the discovery of mechanical power in the nineteenth century A.D. Man became a farmer.

It is perhaps difficult to realize at first what an immense thing this is, particularly as it turns to a great extent on the very prosaic (but vital) question of food. The life of the Old Stone Age people (like that of most animals) was almost entirely occupied with hunting food, eating, sleeping, and propagating their kind. Living from hand to mouth, a super-beast still fighting against beasts, with the prospect of starvation constantly before his eyes, man had little chance to develop his brain. Security of life is necessary for any mental advance, and one essential of security is the being assured, not only of today's dinner, but of tomorrow's and next week's. So long as you subsist solely on meat obtained by hunting, or fruit gathered in season, your subsistence is insecure. But when you not only gather grass seeds but put some aside to sow in the spring, when you do not immediately kill the wild oxen you pursue but drive them into a pound and secure the calves and bring them up for your own convenience, *then* you have taken the first steps on the highroad to civilization.

We do not know exactly where the first grain was planted or the first cattle domesticated, nor how the ideas first came to men's minds. As to man's sowing that he might later reap, it has been suggested that the idea arose from seeing the results of strewing funeral offering of wild grain on the freshly furrowed soil of a newly made grave. Such an origin would explain the many primitive religions of the Corn God (who is slain every year and rises afresh in the new crop) and the practice of human sacrifices to secure a good harvest.

These questions of remote origins of ideas, although fascinating, belong to the anthropologist and folklore student rather than to the archaeologist, and what is important to us at present is to realize that, round about 6000 B.C. there were growing up in the Near East a number of colonies of people who had given up the hazardous, roaming life of the hunter for the settled peaceable existence of the farmer. Let us see how it was that these little groups laid the foundations of all subsequent civilization. From archaeological evidence we know that they lived in villages of huts, that they had domesticated cows, sheep, goats, and pigs, and that they grew grain and wove cloth. Their tools were mainly of stone, metal (except for a very little copper), being practically unknown. Why are these simple communities of such importance in the story of mankind ?

In the first place it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the secure and comparatively tranquil life of the primitive man as a farmer gave his mind, for the first time, an opportunity to develop and to engage itself on problems that had never before concerned it. For instance, he became necessarily interested in his relations to his neighbour in a way hitherto unknown. Village or community life made him a member of a larger and more complex group than the family, and as the village idea developed a man could belong to groups within the group—not only to his own family by birth, but to a guild or 'Trade Union' by occupation and finally to a village or town either by birth or adoption. His loyalty was thus enlarged, and while in purely domestic affairs he would act as a member of his family, in larger issues—a flood, or an attack by a marauding tribe—the unit for which he would strive would be the larger one, the community of which he was a member. So, by slow degrees, man's sphere of loyalty has enlarged through city states to nations and empires, and there are some of us optimistic enough to hope (despite many distressing signs to the contrary) that before long he will realize that today the only real unit for which he must strive is Mankind.

But to return to our early villagers. An inevitable necessity to any group of persons is a code of rules or laws. No one can enjoy complete personal liberty (in the sense that he can do absolutely what he likes when he likes) unless he is the sole inhabitant of a desert island. The actions of members of a group must be controlled so that antisocial acts (acts not to the advantage of the group as a whole) are kept in check. So from these primitive communities come the first laws of human behaviour on which all civilization is based.

As soon as man became a producer of foodstuffs he automatically became a trader. Probably in the very earliest agricultural societies each farm supported the farmer and his family and no one else, but soon there would be a farmer with a surplus of grain but a shortage of milk, who would suggest to his neighbour that he might exchange bowls of milk for baskets of corn. Here is the beginning of barter and trade, which in turn leads to a system of weights and measures, money, written records of business transactions, and above all, arithmetic. Connected with arithmetic is astronomy and the construction of a calendar; hunters have no need to know what the date is, nor to search out the order of the stars. But a farmer must know the time of ploughing, of sowing, and of reaping; and the herdsman watching his flock through the night sees the great constellations wheeling across the skies, and the planets threading their slow course through them. When fields are to be laid out, and houses built, the principles of geometry and trigonometry have to be arrived at; the mysteries of metal-smelting are the first experiments in applied chemistry—in short, practically all our sciences have their remote origin in the first agricultural communities. Nor did man's mind rest content with ascertainable facts: it busied itself in speculation on the origin of man and of the world, of the problems of Good and Evil—Man began to make not only Gods but formal religions.

So we see that the early farming cultures are indeed the foundation of all that we today know as civilization. In Mesopotamia and India there grew up, around about 3000 B.C., such city states of Ur and Eridu, Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, representing civilizations whose brilliance astounds us today. And this civilizing idea spread rapidly. The First Dynasty of Egypt and the First Dynasty of Ur are nearly contemporary with the beginning of the Minoan culture in Crete, and soon the Aegean was a centre of trade, and we see the foundation of the first village on the most famous of ancient sites—Troy. This village was, about 2600 B.C., succeeded by the great trading centre known as Troy II (Homer's city was Troy VI). It was probably through the trading activities of Troy II that the elements of civilization came to North Europe; and, owing to the Alpine ice and the thick forests, the river Danube was virtually the only natural thoroughfare into Europe at this time. The Trojan traders sought to exploit the gold, copper, and cinnabar of Transylvania by the Danube route, and trading stations such as that at Vinča grew up, while the Danubian peasants, who fortunately lived on soil admirably suited to agriculture, adopted the ideas of agriculture and village life from the traders. We cannot trace in detail the spread of the idea, but it must be pointed out that the use of metal (always a secret and a mystery) did not at first penetrate further than the lower Danube. So we have finally what is called a New Stone Age culture—varying in different localities in details, but based on the same idea—spreading over North Europe among the dwindled descendants of the Old Stone Age hunters.

CHAPTER VI

FARMERS AND MERCHANTS

We saw in the last chapter how, when the climate of Europe became very moist and forests spread over the open tundras, the Old Stone Age Hunters were eking out a rather wretched existence by beachcombing and, where the woods were not too thick, hunting. But, at the same time, the new ideas of agriculture and village life were spreading from the Near East, and, owing to the activities of the traders in the lower Danube, this civilizing influence was being felt in Europe. People who live permanently in houses and villages, and make pots and tools and lose and break them in the same place for a long time, naturally leave more remains for the archaeologist to dig up than do roving bands of hunters; and so from now on (about 2000 B.C. or a little earlier) the archaeology of Europe is so complicated that in a short book it is impossible to deal with it all. It will be much more convenient to consider one small area and trace the happenings there, and for our purposes the most convenient area is Great Britain.

Britain was, about 2500 B.C., still inhabited by the remnants of the Old Stone Age Hunters, and her subsequent story tells not of evolution going on by itself, but of successive immigrations of people or of infiltration of ideas from the Continent. Our first farmers seem to have come from France across the Channel (which had not been long formed, and may have been narrower than it is today), and the evidence of their particular kind of pottery and so on rather suggests that they may have been related to the early agriculturalists of Switzerland. They knew nothing of the use of metals, and all their tools were of stone. These folk settled in the chalk country of Sussex and Wessex, and after a time spread out to other parts of Britain. About the same time another group of people, from Denmark, had come in on our East Coasts and were settling, particularly on the seashore or in the river valleys. Finally, there was a very important and rather different immigration affecting the West Coasts. It seems that in the Mediterranean a religious fashion had begun of burying the dead in great tombs which consisted of a vault led up to by a narrow passage, at the mouth of which was a sort of porch where offerings to the dead could be placed, and services held by the priests. These tombs were either cut out of the solid rock, or, if the work was too hard, built of stone and covered by a mound. The idea looks very much like an attempt to make an artificial cave, and perhaps the germ of the idea may go back to the memory of the times when caves were the only houses, for of course a tomb is a house of the dead.

Whatever may have been the origin of the idea, it spread with great rapidity, and one is forced to think that it must have been carried by some sort of missionaries, who persuaded the people they came in contact with that they had a highly superior brand of magic and a sure recipe for immortality in their special kind of tomb. For all the way up the Spanish and Portuguese Coasts, in Brittany, the Channel Islands, Ireland, West England and Scotland, and even finally in Scandinavia, we find these great stone tombs (called by archaeologists 'megaliths') which testify to the zeal and courage of those intrepid 'medicine-men' who, in small open boats, undertook perilous voyages up the Atlantic Coasts to the North. Such a state of affairs existed again about A.D. 500–600 when the 'British Saints' voyaged to and fro along our western coasts, and Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany were once more united in a common faith.

How exactly these various immigrations and ideas mingled in Britain is not at present known, but we do know that the most important was the South Coast immigration of the first farmers. This is what archaeologists call a 'basic culture', and it seems to have adopted various ideas, particularly the megalithic idea of tomb-building, from the other immigrants. From the villages of this New Stone Age culture which have been excavated in South England we can get a very fair idea of the daily life of the people there, round about 2000 B.C.

Suppose we have stepped back 4000 years and are making a visit to one of the villages. We are walking along the downs, which look very much as they do today, but below us the valley-lands, instead of a patchwork quilt of fields and roads, are, as far as the eye can see, great tangled forests or muddy swamps, from which the grass-covered downs, with patches of scrub and brushwood, stand out like great islands in a sea. Along the ridge is a trackway which wanders irregularly about, and following this we come in sight of the village on a low flattish knoll. At a distance we can see only a scatter of thatched huts inside a roughly circular boundary made of an irregular bank of chalk dug out and piled up and gleaming white against the dun clouds and grey downs. Round about it are little cultivated fields like allotments. It has only just stopped raining—it rains a great deal—and wisps of smoke show that sulky fires are being coaxed into life again. As we get nearer we see how the chalk bank is crowned with boughs of prickly thorn-bushes, to keep off prowling animals at night, and we go in through a gap in the bank where the thorns have been pulled aside. We see on each side of us the ditch from which it was dug out. It does not hold much water except in pools (for water quickly drains into chalk), but in the sticky rubble that has slipped back from the bank half-a-dozen rather scraggy long-legged pigs are routing round in the garbage—bits of animal skin and bones, some with scraps of decaying meat still on them (a lot of these), broken pots, bits of grinding stones. Most of the rubbish of the village seems to have been thrown into the ditches, and the smell comes up strongly after the rain.

Inside, where the ground is almost everywhere trodden about into slippery chalk mud, we see that in addition to the rough huts of boughs covered with skins or turf, or both, there are irregular ditches and banks—like that round the outside but smaller—and we hear the lowing of cattle and the bleating of sheep which are penned inside. In one of the inner ditches a fire has been made, sheltered from the wind, and round the fire a group of people are collected. They are on the average not very tall, and they are dressed in garments of soft skins, worn hair outermost, made of skins sewn together with bone needles threaded with sinews. In the middle of the group are three young men standing laughing and looking proudly at the carcass of a great deer that they have hunted and killed with their flint-tipped spears. Two women are very rapidly and skilfully skinning the deer, using a flint knife, and as we watch they finish their task and start spreading out the skin, hair downwards, on the ground, stretching it by driving wooden pegs in round the edge. Then they set to work to scrape off the fat with flint scrapers fixed in short wooden handles, while others begin cutting up the body of the deer.

As we wander round among the huts we see a woman making pots. She starts with a ring of clay which will eventually be the rim of the pot, and adds pieces of plastic clay to this, gradually building up to the rounded base. Then the pot is carefully moved on one side into shelter to dry. There is an advantage in having pots with a rounded base when you have no flat tables to put them on, and we notice outside a hut a big pot propped securely on three stones with a fire under and around it: it contains some rather doubtful-smelling stew, which is being watched by the mother of the two small children who are very happily rolling in the mud with a good-tempered, rather Chow-like dog. The woman is grinding corn on a slightly hollowed block of sandstone, rubbing the grains into a coarse gritty flour by means of a smaller stone. Squatted on a skin, her husband is making a fresh supply of arrow-heads; he first strikes flakes from a block of flint exactly as an Old Stone Age man would do; then, selecting a suitable flake, he takes up a piece of deer horn, presses it against the flint, and rapidly flakes it into the required lozenge shape.

A herd of very small long-horned cows (hardly larger than Alsatian dogs) comes through one of the gaps in the village enclosure. A boy with them calls out to a girl who is standing by the door of a hut, and picking up a deep pottery bowl she follows the herd to the inner enclosure to do the milking. Following the cows into the village comes a party of women and girls from the little cultivated fields outside, each with a rough wooden hoe with which she has been breaking up the sticky clods ready for the seed-corn.

Such is the sort of life that we can reconstruct from the remains found in Wiltshire and in Sussex, and it may stand as typical of life in England for over a thousand years. But the use of metal for tools, instead of stone, brought about certain changes, particularly in the development of trade. Inland trade, however, had started before the use of metals in England. Flint was being dug from the chalk in deep mines in several places and at these 'industrial centres' implements were made and traded about. Still more remarkable was the trade in axes made of the hard stones of Wales; these axes were made in regular factories where the stone occurred naturally, and thence traded as far south as the Isle of Wight.

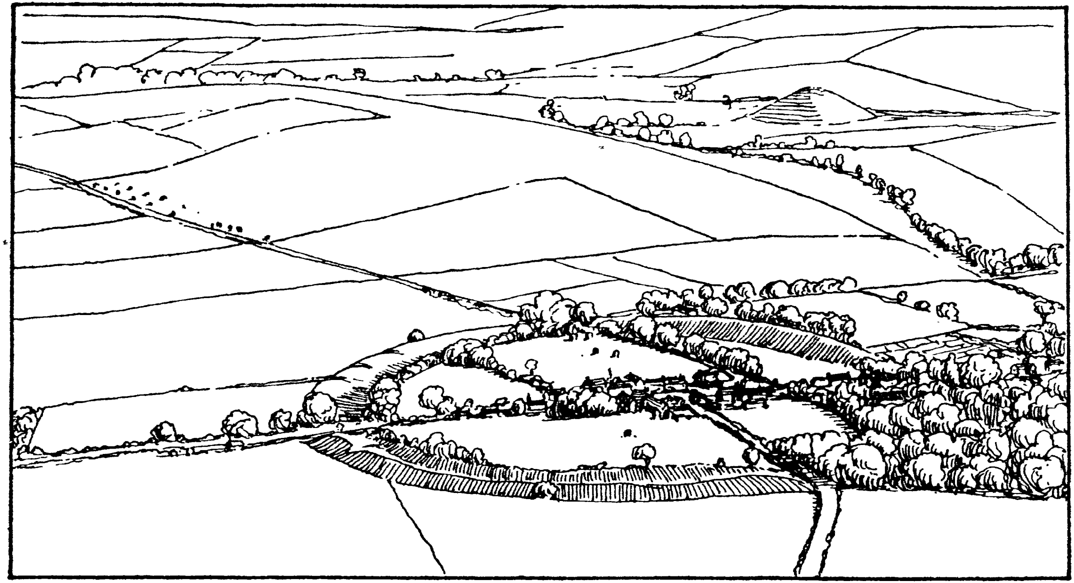
From about 2000–1500 B.C., Britain was in a state of constant ferment, settling down to the new way of life heralded by the New Stone Age folk and continued by the first users of metal who followed hard on their heels. These founders of the Bronze Age in Britain were a remarkable people known to archaeologists as the Beaker folk (from a characteristic pottery vessel used by them on the Continent and in England), and they seem to have come from Central Europe via the Rhineland and Holland. They appear to have been the first true traders and merchants in North-West Europe and it is due to them that the first metal tools were imported into England.

As we saw in Chapter V, the first metal used was copper, but round about 2000 B.C., the metal smiths (perhaps in the second city of Troy) discovered that by adding ten parts of tin to ninety parts of copper a much harder metal—bronze—was produced. Some of our earliest metal tools in England are of copper, including some axes imported from Ireland. Other tools, flat little knife-blades for instance, seem to have been imported from France into South-coast ports in Dorset and elsewhere, and all this new trade appears to have been due to the activity of the Beaker folk, who opened up trade routes from the Continent. As well as the copper or bronze axes, Ireland was exporting ornaments made of gold from the Wicklow

Hills. Most of these came to England and the adjoining parts of the Continent, but quite recently there has been found, during the excavation of the city of Gaza in Palestine, part of an ornamental gold collar which, from its distinctive style, must have been made in Ireland before 1500 B.C. (the date of the surrounding deposit).

After the trading activities of the Beaker people Britain settled down to a period of calm more or less cut off from Continental happenings, and the British Bronze Age developed on its own. Of course, bronze did not supplant stone immediately —at first only the chiefs would be able to afford metal tools, and for some, arrow-heads for example, stone went on being used right through. We know very little about Bronze Age villages, and have to reconstruct the life of the times from the articles which (very conveniently for us) were buried with the dead for use in the next world. So as we have to deal with beliefs in a future life, we must for a moment consider the religion of the times.

At the beginning of the chapter we saw how the idea of great stone tombs was brought to Britain by sea up the western coasts, and how this affected the New Stone Age people. It continued in popularity in the early Bronze Age and found a new expression in the building of great circles of upright stones round burials. This circle-idea was peculiar to the Bronze Age people, and some



AVEBURY

Circles of standing stones within a bank and ditch so large that a village has been built inside it authorities think it may have originated in Holland, where it took the form of putting rings of upright woodposts round a burial, and that it was, so to speak, translated into stone when it was adopted by people living in a stony country. At all events, the New Stone Age folk in England buried their dead under great long mounds; but the Bronze Age folk used rather smaller circular mounds, sometimes very elaborately made with ditches and banks round them. Remains of circles of wood uprights have been found in England, and at Avebury in Wiltshire is the greatest stone circle in the world. Stonehenge is another stone circle, and in many ways, such as the lintel-stones on top of the uprights, it is unique, and this has caused some people to think it is very much later in date than all other circles. The evidence, however, seems to show that it is really Bronze Age. But it is an amazing piece of work for any period, and the fact, which has been proved by geologists, that many of its stones were brought from Pembrokeshire (180-190 miles by the shortest route) makes it still more remarkable.

What was the purpose of these circles, of Stonehenge, Avebury, and the host of smaller ones? Really we do not know. Their first idea seems to have been tombs, but to primitive minds there are no hard and fast divisions between tombs, temples, meeting-places, and other publicly-used spots, and almost any tribal ceremony or business might have been transacted at these circles. People still talk about Druids sacrificing victims at Stonehenge, but this is actually as ridiculous as talking about a modern clergyman preaching a sermon in a Roman Temple, for the circles were made about a thousand years before the Druids are first heard of, and by an entirely different people. The sort of ceremonies that were carried out are more likely to have resembled the dances led by the medicine-men of the American Indians.

In the Bronze Age as in the New Stone Age people believed in a future life, and buried the dead with care, often providing them with tools, weapons, food, or ornaments, for the next world. Only the chiefs would have this elaborate burial; ordinary people were perhaps just buried in holes. But evidently their ideas had changed slightly, for while the New Stone Age people buried their dead unburnt, and put several bodies in one tomb, during the Middle Bronze Age the idea of cremation of the dead came in and only one person was buried under each mound or barrow. It seems that the first idea implies a belief in a resurrection of the body, when the skeleton would come in useful again, and the second, a belief that burning liberates the soul from the useless dead body.

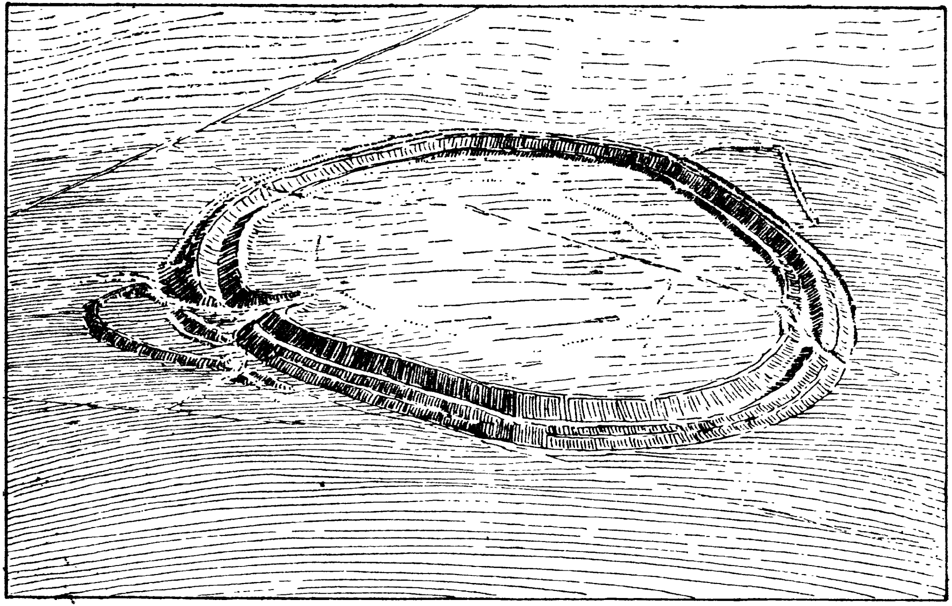
From the contents of Bronze Age barrows, we see that woven cloth was being used for the first time in this period; gold from Ireland, amber from the Baltic, jet from Yorkshire, and even some blue glazed beads which may come from the Mediterranean, were being imported or traded for ornaments. A very interesting fact is that many of the burials are of women, showing that the 'queens' as well as the 'kings' were considered worthy of elaborate burial.

The standard of pottery deteriorated from that of the New Stone Age, but various styles of bronze tools and weapons were evolved in Britain by the native smiths. Owing to the activities of traders in bronze and in ore, trade routes were opened up across Britain, and communications of a sort must have existed between the various tribes. The thick forests of the valleys were still insurmountable obstacles, and people lived on open country—the chalk downs or the gravel patches that had sparse scrubby vegetation growing on them. Agriculture and the general life of the village must have been much the same in 1000 B.C. as in 2000 B.C., although the special type of New Stone Age village with the outer and inner enclosures was given up. Such was life in Britain until about 800 B.C., when once again Continental movements began to affect it.

CHAPTER VII

TOWNS AND CHIEFTAINS

WHILE England was settling down into its Bronze Age, very important and rather complicated happenings were stirring up the Eastern Mediterranean region. The great civilizations of Crete and the Greek mainland had reached their height, and, owing to various reasons which we cannot go into here, these civilizations collapsed about 1200 B.C. At the same time, and connected (in some way that we cannot at present understand) with this downfall of the Mediterranean civilizations, there were stirrings of peoples in Asia Minor and Eastern Europe. Two great events took place in these parts. The people of the Russian steppes had domesticated the horse for the first time in Europe, and in Asia Minor the use of iron for tools and weapons had been discovered. The whole of Eastern Central Europe was in a ferment, and an expansion and colonization of people took place, roughly from the region which is now Austria. These people, still Bronze users, are distinguished by archaeologists as the 'Urnfield people', because, instead of burying the ashes of their dead in barrows or mounds, they



YARNBURY

The grass-grown ramparts of an Iron Age town on Salisbury Plain put them instead into pots and buried them in cemeteries or 'urnfields'. The urnfield folk, who seem to have been the people later known as the Celts, may almost be said to have founded an empire in their spread over Europe. This spread extended even to England, which they reached about 800 B.C., and it was their unifying action in linking up what had been scattered communities that made it possible for the use of iron, and all that it implied, to spread as rapidly as it did, just as the New Stone Age paved the way for bronze.

For the first iron-users who came to England did not bring with them merely a new tool material, but a new idea of social organization. Archaeologists have pointed out that when a great civilization collapses and its territory is overrun by barbarians, the barbarians, when they begin to settle down, copy as best they can the organization of the destroyed civilization. So it was with the Teutons and Goths after the downfall of the Roman Empire; so it was with the first iron-users after the destruction of Mycenaean civilization. In Greece itself, the first Iron Age, the so-called 'Geometric period' (from the style of ornament on the pottery), eventually gave rise to the famous city states based on a dim recollection of the cities of Knossos and Mycenae; in England, the early Iron Age, which established itself about 500 B.C., also produced its version of the defended city or tribal capital.

The first iron-users in England did not, of course, come as one single immigration, but small groups of people must have been crossing the channel and landing at various places along the coast for a long time, and they seem to have made themselves into a ruling class. For the first time we see in England a distinct aristocratic class, 'heroes' as the Homeric heroes are—producing nothing themselves and dependent on a labouring class for the necessities of life. They were the forerunners of the mediaeval barony. The chalklands of Wessex and Sussex were still the great centres of population, where open land for grazing and agriculture were available; for agriculture developed enormously in the four hundred years or so before Christ, and what is today grassy downland must have been mainly cornfields. The country seems to have been split up into numbers of small tribes, under governing 'barons' more or less friendly one to another; for there is little evidence of warfare other than occasional raids, and much evidence of the peaceful pursuits of agriculture and trading. The centre of each tribal unit was the defended town; what is called today by archaeologists a 'Hill Fort', and by many people who ought to know better a 'Roman Camp'. Even now after two thousand years the great grass-grown ramparts of the hill forts along the downs are very impressive. In 300 B.C. or 400 B.C. they must have been even more so.

Let us try to reconstruct the scene. The top of the hill is ringed round with a great deep ditch dug in the chalk, and on the inner edge is a massive timber breastwork backed with a ramp of material dug out from the ditch. At one point, to which runs the trackway along the ridge, is a causeway across the ditch, leading to a great gateway with double wooden gates which close on a central post. Above, is a sort of bridge carrying over the pathway that runs round the defences on top of the rampart and behind the timber breastwork. This pathway can be manned and patrolled should a neighbouring tribe attempt a cattle-raid. Then (and every evening at sunset) the herds would be driven in, and the great gates closed. Now, swung back inwards, they are open. At the gate the ramparts are turned inwards on each side, to make a sort of funnel-shaped approach, and are continued a short way inside, where, on each side of the pathway, a log hut is half built into the bank where the gatekeepers live to challenge the stranger who seeks admission. Inside the town wall (for this is what the ramparts of a Hill Fort really amount to) the scene is not unlike the new Stone Age village we visited in Chapter VI. But the huts are quite well-built timber structures, and arranged in rough lanes or streets, and in addition to the ancient industries of pot-making and leather-curing, we see such innovations as brightly patterned cloth being woven on a loom, while the smith, in his separate and most important establishment, is beating out an iron knife.

Outside the town are the cornfields: groups of small, roughly square, fields, with roadways between the groups, leading up to the main ridgeway; and the fields are being ploughed with oxen, not merely scratched with hoes. Horses are also to be seen, but they are not used for draught work, for they are too light and small. In one or two places among the fields there are little villages of thatched huts, and even separate farms, which are under the authority of the chieftain, whose seat of government is the defended town. Thither the villagers bring their produce to the market to barter with the smith for fresh tools, or to bargain for a length of cloth for a new cloak.

The whole organization of Celtic England is, in fact, very like that of the Middle Ages—a feudal system in fact, but lacking the centralized government. The towns—half-towns, half-castles—are the important centres, each governed by its lord and his followers and linked together by the trackways along which plod the traders. A certain degree of civilization perhaps, but still really barbarian. For consider that in Athens at this very time we might have overheard such a snatch of conversation as this: '. . . And must we not on the same principles assert, my friend, that men by being hurt are lowered in the scale of human excellence?' 'Unquestionably they are'. 'But is not justice a human excellence . . . ?' Socrates and Polemarchus are discussing justice. We, today, have not advanced much further in abstract thought.

And yet, in an indirect and curious manner, the Greeks were influencing North-West Europe, and eventually England, in the first few centuries B.C. Their trading colonies had been founded all round the Mediterranean, and one of the most important was Massilia, today Marseilles, where the Greek merchants from about 600 B.C. had been trading with the barbarian Celts, the most important object of trade being wine. Until about 200 B.C. Greece was practically the only wine-producing country in the Mediterranean, and wine was actually made at Massilia. It seems that the thirsty Celtic chieftains eagerly imported this pleasant drink, and, as a result, wine jars and flagons of Greek manufacture found their way into Northern Europe. These vessels decorated in the Greek style with conventional foliage and other devices inspired the Celtic craftsmen to a most remarkable outburst of artistic production, which, although originally based on Greek designs, rapidly developed into a very individual and beautiful style.

Since the wonderful drawings of the old Stone Age, art in North-West Europe had been at a very low ebb. Pottery decoration was about the only attempt at ornamental pattern, and this, in the New Stone and Bronze Ages, rarely rose above rather uninspired bands of zig-zags impressed on the wet clay with twisted pieces of string or scratched with a point, with patterns made with the finger-nails to liven the monotony occasionally. But Celtic art (which, as we have seen, originated in France, partly owing to the thirst of the natives, and spreading to England about 600 B.C. took firm root and reached a higher pitch there than anywhere else), is an exciting and living thing which ranks amongst the greatest decorative arts of any time or place.

When we were discussing the Old Stone Age drawings, we talked a little about representational and conventionalized art. The Reindeer in the French caves are representational—they are drawings made to look like the animals. But Celtic art is not representational: it is based on swirling curves and running scrolls built up into patterns of complete beauty. Whether the designs are drawn on pottery or carved on wood, made in enamel work or cast in bronze, at their best they are without equal. Why the Celtic artists chose always to make pure designs and never representations, we do not know. There may have been a taboo on representing natural forms such as there is among Mohammedans, and which in their case has given rise to the beautiful abstract designs on their rugs and carpets.

The idea of this new style of art was brought over to England round about 100 B.C. by one group of people who came from Brittany and settled in Somerset and the district around and others from the Paris region who landed in East Anglia and Yorkshire. Near Glastonbury in Somerset there have been excavated two large villages of these folk. The country there is very flat, and even today, with modern drainage systems, there are frequently great floods in wet weather, so in 100 B.C. the whole district must have been nothing but lakes and marshes. The Celtic folk, however, built up a sort of artificial island for their village, made of earth reinforced with very strong timber work, and on this built their circular wooden houses. There was a little harbour for boats with a breakwater, and as the place became in time buried in peat, and has always remained fairly damp, anything made of wood has been preserved. This is very unusual, because as a rule wood rots away and leaves no trace, so that we know very little about its use in prehistoric times. But from Glastonbury we have such things as wooden tubs, bowls and ladles, a ladder, a boat made by hollowing out a solid tree trunk, an iron billhook and knives in their original handles, to say nothing of all the carpentry work of the houses, squared timbers fastened with mortice and tenon-joints, and the piles and palisade that held the 'island' together.

A great many of the wooden bowls and so on were decorated with beautiful carved designs, and so was the pottery. An interesting thing to notice is that, though hundreds of tools were found, practically nothing that could be called a weapon turned up. This shows that the marsh villagers lived a peaceful life, doing what agriculture they could where there was a chance on drier ground, and fishing and hunting the wild fowl (which, incidentally, included pelicans).

We have seen how the culture of ancient Greece eventually, and in a roundabout way, affected prehistoric England; but now we come to another great civilization whose influence on North-West Europe was to be very different and very much more important. Among the various groups of early iron-users, round about 800 B.C. (as we saw at the beginning of the chapter) were those of Italy. There had also come to Italy from Asia Minor, at this period of upheaval, a tribe later to be known as the Etruscans, and from these tribes there had come into being a nation—the Romans. After a series of wars and conquests, ending round about 200 B.C., Rome was becoming the greatest power in the Mediterranean, and beginning to think of the possibility of adding the barbarians of North-West Europe to her growing Empire. Pre-history was about to give way to history.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROMAN AND HIS TROUBLE

To return to the happenings in Northern Europe. Somewhere round about 75 B.C. a group of tribes, called by classical writers the Belgae (who gave their name to the present Belgium), moved over into England, probably because they were being attacked by other tribes from the East. They established themselves particularly in the country near the mouth of the Thames: Kent, Middlesex, Hertfordshire, and East Anglia. And we now come so near history that we actually know the names of some of the Belgic leaders and of the towns they founded in Britain. The two greatest towns of which we know were Verulamium, which lay near the Roman town to the west of St. Albans, and Camulodunum, which is just outside Colchester. These names, and any personal names we have of this period, are, of course, only known to us through classical writers, and, consequently, are in a latinized form, not their original Celtic.

The recent excavations of the prehistoric town of Verulamium have not affected a large area, but we can see that the life of the people there was little, if at all, different from that of the early Iron Age town described in Chapter VII. Verulamium seems to have been a rather straggling settlement, defended by banks and ditches and a palisade. Inside, among other remains, cobbled roads have been found with cart ruts, which are the same width apart as the modern gauge of 4 ft. 8½ in. This standard width is evidently extremely ancient, for it appears as early as the New Stone Age in the Mediterranean.

The main difference we see in the Belgic settlements in England is that they were importing a great deal of better-class pottery from the Continent, and actually from Italy; and not only pottery but jars of wine. Furthermore, the Belgic people had picked up from the Romans the idea of making coins. They made them at first in imitation of a certain gold coin of Philip II of Macedon, vast numbers of which had come into circulation in the Roman Empire after the Roman wars against Macedon in the second century B.C. The design was then adapted in the distinctive Celtic style, the name of the chieftain who was issuing the coinage being sometimes added. Sometimes, too, the name of the mint was given, so that we know that coins were struck both at Verulamium and Camulodunum.

The Roman Campaign of conquering Gaul under Julius Caesar had started in 61 B.C.; and by 52 B.C. the last effective resistance of the Gauls had been crushed. In this year a final and magnificent stand had been made by the Gaulish chieftain, Vercingetorix; but his revolt was suppressed by the Romans, and his town of Alesia fell into their hands. Another chieftain, Commius, who had revolted with Vercingetorix, led another minor revolt after the defeat at Alesia. This too was unsuccessful, and he fled to Britain, apparently with a number of followers.

In Britain, Commius seems to have founded another kingdom, with its capital at Silchester in North Hampshire; and so practically all South-East England had become Gaulish in tradition.

In 54 B.C. Julius Caesar led an exploratory raid into England, and Cassivelaunus, whose capital was at Verulamium, was elected leader of the Britons. The expedition, however, had very little effect upon Britain, except to strengthen the Belgic feeling against the Romans; and, after Caesar had withdrawn, Southern Britain seems to have settled down. We know the names of various chieftains about this time and the regions they ruled: for instance, Commius had three sons, who, between them, ruled most of Kent and Sussex, and then, apparently, one Dubnovellaunus united Kent after Caesar's invasion. But the most important figure is Cunobelin (Shakespeare's Cymbeline), son of Tasciovanus of Verulamium, who, early in the first century A.D., had brought the whole of South-East England under his rule, and established his capital and his mint at Camulodunum, and was, in fact, styled with some truth by a Roman writer—'King of the Britons'.

As we have seen, South-East Britain (which was the most important part from the point of view of settlement or conquest from the Continent) had become in many ways very Romanized. A great deal of imported Roman goods were being used, and it is probable that, in his policy of collecting all the tribes under one central government, Cunobelin was influenced by Roman ideas. And yet, despite all this, the feeling of the Belgae was still, as always, very strongly anti-Roman.

Rome, ever since Caesar's invasion, had considered the possibility of adding Britain to the Empire, but waited until a favourable opportunity presented itself. Although not part of the Roman Empire, Britain was quite closely in touch with Rome, even to the extent of sending emissaries thither; so Rome knew all that was happening in these remote islands. Her opportunity came when Cunobelin died in A.D. 41. Like all dictators he had held his kingdom together solely by his personality, and, like all dictatorships, on his death it collapsed, and civil war in Britain ensued. A Roman expedition came to Britain in A.D. 43, entering by way of the Thames. The Belgic tribes put up stout opposition, but the other tribes which had been brought under the rule of Cunobelin submitted to the Romans and actually sided with them: not because they liked the Romans but because they shared with them a hatred of the Belgae. By A.D. 47 Britain had been effectively conquered as far west as Wales, and Cunobelin's son, Caratacus, who had been driven westwards, collected the tribes of the Welsh border and was finally defeated by the Romans in A.D. 51.

The conquest of South Britain was now virtually complete, and the only revolt on a large scale was that of the Iceni of East Anglia (whom we know from archaeological evidence to have been a backward and barbarous people). Led by their Queen Boudicca, they swept down towards the Thames, burning the towns of Verulamium and Camulodunum, and even Londunium itself. This revolt was repressed so cruelly that the Roman Governor responsible was recalled in disgrace.

Prehistoric Britain had now become Historic Britain. No longer was it a remote island peopled by barbarian tribes, but part of the great Roman Empire. But how much did this affect it? When we come to look at the archaeological evidence, the Romanization of Britain is seen to have affected the life of the people very little. Before elaborating this point, we must recall an important fact about the geography of England, a fact that has had an important bearing on all early settlements. If a line is drawn on the map from the mouth of the Severn to the Yorkshire Wolds, roughly speaking everything to the South-East of that line is lowland country, and everything to the North-West is highland; and it works out as an archaeological rule that in the lowland area you get successive cultures of people from the Continent, each imposing its new ideas on the last, but in the highland area these new ideas, taking longer to penetrate by reason of the geographical difficulties, are more slowly absorbed by the people. Consequently the Roman Conquest of Britain was really only effective in the sense that it changed the life of the people relatively quickly in the lowlands. In the highlands, the prehistoric way of life went on almost entirely unaltered, and all the Romans did was to keep the natives in order by means of military garrisons, much as we have done on the North-West Frontier of India.

As to the life of the people in the South, the Roman occupation was, one might say, not a completely new and revised edition of the native book of everyday life, but merely a translation into Latin.

The Roman idea of towns and cities, as we have seen, was known in England centuries before, and the translation took the form in many cases of building a Roman town either actually within the limits of the earlier one, as at Silchester, or very near it, as at Verulamium and Colchester. The villagers went on just as usual, except that the natives used Roman factory-made pots and pans, used Roman coins instead of relying on barter, and adopted a primitive type of furnace for drying corn, which seems to have been a Roman idea. Farms (that had existed since late Bronze Age times) were translated into 'Villas', which are nothing more than the small country houses with farms attached of the Romans or the Romanized natives. Agriculture seems to have flourished exceedingly; nearly all the chalk-downs of Wiltshire and Sussex were exploited, and even in the Cambridgeshire fens elaborate systems of drainage trenches were made round the little irregular cornfields which existed in vast numbers round the villages there.

An architectural novelty introduced by the Romans was that of building in brick or stone. With the exception of rough hut circles in the highlands, no buildings as such are known before the Roman occupation. Naturally, there was not a wholesale scrapping of wooden huts and replacement by brick buildings. In the towns and in the villas, brick and stone were freely used, in addition to half-timbering; but the little upland villages of Wessex and Sussex must have looked exactly as they did in the early Iron Age.

This was the great material achievement of

Rome in Britain, but an even greater achievement was the stabilized government—the famous Pax Romana, which ensured a state of settled peacefulness throughout Britain. Men could practise agriculture and the trades could prosper without any feeling of imminent upheaval.

This state of affairs did not last for ever, although it did last for 350 years. But Rome was becoming increasingly threatened by the inroads of barbarian tribes—the Goths and Vandals—and in A.D. 410 the Emperor Honorius recalled the legions from the outermost parts of the Empire (and so from Britain) back to Rome. Britain was, in fact, deprived of her police force. What exactly happened during the next hundred years is still very obscure, but we have occasional glimpses of the facts. Britain lapsed into a state of prehistoric culture with surprising rapidity. We can see one interesting example of this at Cissbury in Sussex. One of the problems the Romans had had to contend with were the attacks made by Saxon pirates along the South and South-East coasts, and to this end they had established a series of coastal fortresses commanded by a group of men known as the Counts of the Saxon shore. When with the withdrawal of the army, these fortresses became no longer effective, the Romanized Britons of Cissbury, who during the Roman occupation had been growing corn within the great Iron Age hill fort there, made a frantic attempt to refortify this abandoned fortress against the Saxons—a complete return to prehistoric ideas. It is all the more remarkable when one considers the length of time of the Roman occupation—to the Cissbury folk the rebellion of Boudicca would be as long ago as the Armada is to us.

One more point out of many may be emphasized. The Romans were the first to make really successful use of mass-production methods. They established factories for most things in common use: pottery, glass, brooches, and so on. This, while it has made classification easy for archaeologists, also produced a dull uniformity in Roman provincial products. With the break-up of Roman civilization in England, and the consequent decay of their excellent road system, the potteries were unable to dispose of their goods. Now, in a prehistoric village, practically any woman could turn her hand to pot-making, but after three hundred years of enjoying a mass-production civilization (that is, buying one's pots and pans at Woolworth's) there was no one outside the skilled craftsmen of the factories who could make pottery, and so, so far as we know, there was scarcely any pottery at all made in Britain—or at any rate only the very crudest efforts—until the craft was introduced by the Saxons.

We have now brought the story of early man well into the historic period, and there we must leave it, although in the next and last chapter we shall see very briefly how the first part of the history of man in Britain—that before written history—joins on to the second and historical phase.

CHAPTER IX

EPILOGUE

So we finish our journey in time, glimpsing man's activities from the remote beginning to the dawn of recorded history. It has necessarily been of the nature rather of a breathless tour in a fast car on the main roads than a leisurely perambulation across country, and we have only been able to glance at the main landmarks in passing, but we should have got a general impression of the lie of the land, and we ought to be able to draw an outline sketch map of human progress in the long centuries before written history. But we cannot leave off abruptly where there is no real division, and it will be worth while to outline very shortly how, looked at from the view-point of the archaeologist, the prehistory of England joins up with her history.

After the collapse of the Roman civilization and the immigrations of the Teutonic tribes collectively lumped together as the 'Anglo-Saxons', Britain rapidly fell back into a state of savage barbarism and isolation from the rest of Europe. Connexion with what had always been the centre of European civilization — the Mediterranean region — came again much as it had come in the New Stone Age over two thousand years before, in the form of a religious movement. Just as the megalithic idea (as we saw in Chapter VI) linked Britain with the cultures of the Atlantic seaboard and so finally with the Mediterranean, so did the Early Christian missionaries, bringing another brand of religion, join the remote northern island to what remained of the classical culture of Rome. It was a second Roman Conquest; the early Popes were definitely anxious to form once again a Roman Empire, and this they ultimately did by producing a united Christendom.

This linking of Britain to the main stream of continental culture was strengthened by the Norman Conquest, and throughout the twelfth, thirteenth, and early fourteenth centuries A.D. Britain was culturally one with France. The architecture illustrates this excellently — from the Romanesque of France and England (the so-called Norman style) there is a parallel development. In the twelfth century we see French architects employed on English cathedrals—such as William of Sens at Canterbury—and it is not until the fourteenth century that we see the beginnings of individual development in France (the 'Flamboyant' style) and in England (the 'Perpendicular').

England becomes insular again, consolidating herself in the sixteenth century, although, curiously enough, again absorbing a Mediterranean culture in the Renaissance. By the seventeenth century we are on the threshold of modern times, when intercommunications, both by actual travel and the spread of ideas by printed books, make it difficult to apply the purely archaeological view-point to the interpretation of cultures. Nevertheless, this view-point remains of value even in the interpretation of happenings at the present day. No fitter conclusion can be given to this book, which has attempted to show how archaeologists work and what they have achieved in unravelling the tangled skein of man's past, than these words, from one of the wisest books ever written on archaeology.

> 'Human history is one history and human welfare is one whole'—that is the justification for anthropology. That is why we carry on with our work undismayed, even in such times as the present—we alone can look without flinching on the break-ups of old nations and civilizations—we have created mighty empires out of the dust and have watched them crumbling again. In our eyes a thousand years are but as yesterday. We deal wholesale in time, and having strengthened our vision by scanning the vistas of the past, we find that we can also view the future with less uncertainty. We no longer live from day to day—we take long views.[1]

[1] O. G. S. Crawford, *Man and his Past*, 36–37.

BOOKS TO READ

For those who may have decided that prehistoric archaeology is sufficiently interesting to merit further investigation, suggestions as to more advanced reading may be useful. O. G. S. Crawford's *Man and his Past* (Oxford, 10s. 6d.) is a classic exposition of the philosophy of archaeology, and gives an insight into its methods. For convincing and authoritative pictorial reconstructions, with vivid descriptive text, particularly suitable for children, the Quennells' *Everyday Life* series (Batsford, 5s. each) are almost too well known to need recommendation: parts of the volumes would, however, need modification in the light of new knowledge. *The Corridors of Time*, by H. J. E. Peake and H. J. Fleure (Oxford, 5s. each volume), give in succinct although perhaps slightly technical form all the essential information for the whole of the Old World: they are fully illustrated and eight volumes have appeared out of the total of ten.

For the geographical method of study as applied to our own country Dr. Cyril Fox's *Personality of Britain* (Cardiff, The National Museum of Wales, 3s. 6d.) is a brilliant essay illustrated with a large number of distribution maps, while the general survey of *Archaeology in England and Wales* 1914–1931, by T. D. Kendrick and C. F. C. Hawkes (Methuen, 18s.), gives a fully documented summary of modern views on British archaeology. Field-archaeology—the study of 'outdoor' remains such as earthworks—is dealt with from the aerial view-point in the sumptuous *Wessex from the Air*, by O. G. S. Crawford and A. Keiller (Oxford, 42s.), and in the more accessible *Prehistoric Sussex*, by E. C. Curwen (Homeland Association, 10s. 6d.), which, although limited in its title and scope to a single county, is actually applicable to the whole of the downland regions and is a first-rate introduction to the study.

The details of which Chapters III to VIII are based are for the most part contained in technical papers in scientific periodicals: *The Old Stone Age*, by M. C. Burkitt (Cambridge, 8s. 6d.), gives, however, an account, both readable and authoritative, of the substance of Chapters III and IV. The quarterly journal *Antiquity* (20s. per year) stands apart from ordinary archaeological periodicals, as it caters for the layman as well as the professional, and in its pages much will be found in amplification of this book: for example, Dr. E. C. Curwen's article on *Neolithic Camps* (*Antiquity*, iv. 1930) should be read in connexion with Chapter VI, or that on *Hill-Forts*, by Mr. C. F. C. Hawkes (v; 1931) with Chapter VII. For those desiring guidance in that most vexed question, that of the Druids, it may be as well to point out that Mr. T. D. Kendrick's study *The Druids* (Methuen, 12s. 6d.) is the only sane book ever written on the subject.

With regard to Roman Britain, the classic is still Haverfield and Macdonald's *The Roman Occupation of Britain* (Oxford, 18s.), which may be supplemented on the archaeological side by R. G. Collingwood's *Archaeology of Roman Britain* (Methuen, 16s.).

Finally, it should be remembered that these books are only the guides to the real thing—read first, and then get out on to the downs or the moors and look for yourself at barrows and stone circles, hut villages or hill forts; go into museums and study the fragments of pottery or the flint or bronze tools that the books describe and classify, and get to know things at first hand.

THE END

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